

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 DHA-02
TRSE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 AID-05 PC-01 MCT-01 /080 W
-----201302Z 101098 /47

P R 191900Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1725
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 4054

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJECT: INCREASING TENSION OVER STUDENT PROTESTS

REF: A. BRASILIA 3829 B. SAO PAULO 1161 C. SAO PAULO 0809

1. SUMMARY. THE "NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE" SLATED BY STUDENTS FOR MAY 19 HAS GAINED WIDESPREAD SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSITIES OF BRAZIL, GENERATING INCREASINGLY APPARENT GOVERNMENT CONCERN. FEDERAL AUTHORITIES, WHO HAVE PROHIBITED ALL PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, SEE THE STUDENTS' ACTIONS AS A CHALLENGE WHICH MUST BE ISOLATED BEFORE SPREADING TO OTHER SECTORS OF THE POPULACE -- ESPECIALLY WORKERS -- AND HAVE APPEALED TO THE STUDENTS TO HALT THEIR DEMONSTRATIONS FOR THE "GOOD OF THE COUNTRY." HARDLINE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY ARE CALLING THE DEMONSTRATIONS COMMUNIST-INSPIRED BUT APPEAR WILLING TO PERMIT THEM AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES. SHOULD THE MAY 19 MANIFESTATIONS PROCEED PEACEFULLY, THE STUDENTS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY GO THROUGH WITH THEIR PLANS TO HOLD A NATIONAL MEETING OF STUDENTS IN EITHER SAO PAULO OR BELO HORIZONTE ON
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JUNE 4. END SUMMARY.

2. PLANS FOR THE NATIONAL STUDENT PROTEST SCHEDULED FOR MAY 19 (REFTEL A) HAVE FIRMED UP, AND DEMONSTRATIONS WILL BE HELD ON OR IN THE VICINITY OF UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN AT LEAST EIGHT MAJOR BRAZILIAN CITIES AND THE INTERIOR OF THE STATES OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL AND

SAO PAULO. AS AT THE MOST RECENT SERIES OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, POLICE FORCES IN LARGE NUMBERS, ARMED WITH TEAR GAS, RIOT GUNS AND IN SOME CASES ACCOMPANIED BY ATTACK DOGS, WILL SURROUND THE DEMONSTRATIONS TO PREVENT THEM FROM ANY MARCH THROUGH CITY STREETS. STUDENT LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY INTEND TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE POLICE, BUT WARN THEY CANNOT GAUGE THE REACTIONS OF THEIR COMRADES SHOULD THE POLICE TRY TO IMPEDE THE DEMONSTRATIONS; IN THE WORDS OF ONE STUDENT ACTIVITIST, "IT HAS BEEN NINE YEARS SINCE STUDENTS SMELLED THE SCENT OF TEAR GAS AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT THEIR REACTION THIS TIME SHOULD ANYTHING OCCUR."

3. THE THEME OF THE MAY 19 DEMONSTRATIONS IS A "NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE" FOR DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS, AMONG OTHER ISSUES; RECENT VISITS TO UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT STUDENTS ARE RETURNING TO SUCH PROHIBITED 1968-TYPE SLOGANS AS "DOWN WITH THE DICTATORSHIP" AND "END TO BRAZILIAN FASCISM". SHOULD THE MAY 19 DEMONSTRATIONS PROCEED PEACEFULLY, THE STUDENTS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY GO AHEAD WITH THEIR PLANS FOR A NATIONAL MEETING IN BELO HORIZONTE OR SAO PAULO ON JUNE 4, AT WHICH TIME THEY MAY TRY TO RESURRECT THE NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION (UNE) OUTLAWED IN 1965 BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

4. SUPPORT FOR THE DEMONSTRATIONS HAS COME FROM SOME
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MDB CONGRESSIONAL FIGURES, SOME CHURCHMEN AND THE BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION; SO FAR, HOWEVER, WORKER SUPPORT HAS BEEN MINIMAL. SEVERAL MDB FEDERAL DEPUTIES EXPRESSED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE "DEMOCRATIC GOALS" OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, AND MINORITY LEADER ALENCAR FURTADO ASSERTED THAT THE JUSTICE MINISTRY'S CIRCULAR TO STATE GOVERNORS PROHIBITING DEMONSTRATIONS IN PUBLIC PLACES WAS UNCONSTITUTIONAL. THE SAO PAULO REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION (ORDEM DOS ADVOGADOS BRASILEIROS) AGREED WITH FURTADO'S ASSERTION, AND IN PUBLIC STATEMENT SAID THAT THE CIRCULAR IS ANOTHER BLOW AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO RETURN BRAZIL TO THE RULE OF LAW. THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF THE SAO PAULO ARCHDIOCESE ALSO EXPRESSED ITS SUPPORT FOR WHAT IT CALLED

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P R 191900Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 4054

"THE POPULAR DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS"
AND OFFERED ENCOURAGEMENT TO "ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN
DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE
TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF THE COUNTRY." SUPPORT FROM
WORKERS GROUPS FOR THE DEMONSTRATIONS, PERHAPS THE
GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY CONCERN, HAS NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING.
ALTHOUGH THE STUDENTS FREQUENTLY LIST WORKER
GRIEVANCES AMONG THEIR DEMANDS, UNION LEADERS ON THE
LOCAL LEVEL IS SAO PAULO AND RIO RECENTLY INDICATED
THAT THE BASIS FOR COMMON ACTION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS
DOES NOT EXIST. AS ONE TRADE UNIONIST RECENTLY SAID,
"THERE IS A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STUDENT PROTEST
MARCH AND A WORKERS STRIKE, AND AN EVEN GREATER
DIFFERENCE IN HOW THE GOVERNMENT WILL REACT TO THEM",
IMPLYING THAT WORKERS SEE STUDENTS AS A PRIVILEGED
CLASS WHOSE DEMONSTRATIONS DO NOT MEET THE
SAME SEVERE REPRESSION THAT WORKERS' PROTESTS RECEIVE.

5. THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH AT FIRST TRIED TO IGNORE
THE STUDENT PROTESTS AND THEN LAST WEEK ATTEMPTED
UNSUCCESSFULLY TO PROHIBIT THEM VIA THE JUSTICE
MINISTRY CIRCULAR, HAS SHOWN INCREASING UNEASE ABOUT THE
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MAY 19 DEMONSTRATIONS. EDUCATION MINISTER NEY BRAGA
WENT ON NATIONAL TELEVISION TO APPEAL TO STUDENTS,
PARENTS AND THE PEOPLE IN GENERAL TO STOP THEIR
DEMONSTRATIONS "FOR THE GOOD OF THE FUTURE OF THE NATION."

ALLEGATIONS OF SUBVERSIVE CONTROL AND INTENT OF THE MANIFESTATIONS AND THE WHOLE STUDENT MOVEMENT ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY FREQUENT AND FOR THE FIRST TIME STATEMENTS TO THIS EFFECT HAVE BEEN ISSUED FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY. O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO COLUMNIST CARLOS CHAGAS NOTED INCREASING SYMPATHY AMONG HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FOR QUICK SURPRESSION OF THE "AGITATION" BEFORE IT CAN SPREAD TO OTHER SECTORS OF THE POPULACE AND ADDED THAT ANY CLASHES BETWEEN STUDENTS AND POLICE WILL RESULT IN THE "FURTHER CLOSING OF THE ALREADY IRON REGIME. SECURITY FORCES IN SAO PAULO AND PORTO ALEGRE HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WILL NOT ALLOW DEMONSTRATIONS IN PUBLIC AREAS, WHICH COL. ERASMO DIAS, SAO PAULO STATE SECRETARY OF PUBLIC SAFETY, HAS INDICATED INCLUDES THE LARGO SAO FRANCISCO, SITE OF THE USP LAW SCHOOL AND HERETOFORE RECOGNIZED AS "FREE TERRITORY" BY DIAS HIMSELF (REFTEL C). IN ORDER TO PARTLY EASE THE INCREASING TENSION OVER POSSIBLE VIOLENCE, HIGH JUSTICE MINISTRY SOURCES HAVE LEAKED THE INFORMATION THAT POLICE FORCES WILL NOT INTERRUPT THE DEMONSTRATIONS AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN WITHIN UNIVERSITY CONFINES.

6. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH BOTH SECURITY FORCES AND STUDENTS HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR INTENT TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS DURING THE MAY 19 DEMONSTRATIONS, THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE IS STILL PRESENT. RUMORS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY THAT THE PROTESTORS WANT TO PROVOKE VIOLENCE AND CREATE MARTYRS FOR THEIR CAUSE; WHILE THE VERACITY OF THESE RUMORS IS IN QUESTION, THEY ARE PROBABLY BELIEVED BY THE SECURITY FORCES AND HAVE AN UNSETTLING EFFECT. WHILE THERE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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UNDOUBTEDLY SOME COMMUNIST MANIPULATION OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS, THE EFFECT IS MARGINAL AND BY NO MEANS DETERMINATIVE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS THUS FAR AVOIDED ANY DRASTIC REPRESSIVE MEASURES, SUCH AS WIDESCALE ARRESTS, AND HAS DISCOURAGED ANY PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS BY POLICE. HARDLINE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE SECURITY FORCES, HOWEVER, WHO VIEW THE PROTESTS AS SUBVERSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS, MAY TRY TO BRING ABOUT A CONFRONTATION BEFORE THE STUDENTS HAVE TIME TO SOLIDIFY THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION THEY SEEM TO BE TRYING TO CONSTRUCT. THUS, THE LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENCE ON MAY 19 IS STILL LIMITED; BUT ANY ATTEMPT TO RE-ESTABLISH THE PROHIBITED NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION DURING THE JUNE 4 NATIONAL STUDENTS MEETING WOULD BE SEEN AS AN AFFRONT TO THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AND COULD RESULT IN SERIOUS REPRESSIVE MEASURES. END COMMENT. CRIMMINS

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